WINCHESTER NEWS
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HELPERS AMONG US

Helpers Among Us — Got books? Prison Book Program could use them

JOYCE WESTNER | STAFF WRITER

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Judy Doctoroff, left, helps Prison Book Program Director Kelly Brotzman sort books. COURTES PHOTO/JUDY DOCTOROFF

If you love books, perhaps you donate the ones you've read to a w
cause. Here's one you might not have heard of — the Prison Book

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Winchester resident Judy Doctoroff is a new member of the Prison Book Program board and would be happy to get your books to incarcerated folks both locally and around the country.

Doctoroff moved to Winchester five years ago with her husband, Jim O'Neill, and was looking for a place to volunteer. She was familiar with the prison population from reporting for a PBS program, "Rikers: An American Jail."

"I wanted to provide a deeper level of service," she said.

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The Prison Book Program asks for not only book donations, but monetary donations as well. COURTESY PHOTO/JUDY DOCTOROFF

Doctoroff discovered the organization provides, “an amazing volunteer experience. It’s well-focused work and the volunteers are friendly and committed.”

The program was formed in Quincy nearly 50 years ago and mat
to requests from prisoners, most of which can be done with donated

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books. But 3,000 of them wanted dictionaries, Doctoroff says, and the program also asks for financial donations to buy them.

While the prisoners often ask for novels, they also ask for books that help them "engage with the outside world," says Doctoroff.

One prisoner wanted to help his daughter with her job search, and others ask for self-help and GED prep books, plus books on how to start a company, how to exercise, and language books.

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The theory, says Doctoroff, "is to educate and inspire and to promote rehabilitation through books."

"Volunteers can help in different ways," Doctoroff explains. "Opening the request letters, sorting the books, finding books that match the requests, writing notes to go with the books, or shipping them."

Through this week, Doctoroff says, the Hull Family Foundation will match the cost of purchases from PBP's eight indie bookstore wish lists. The impact of donations will be doubled when people shop at any of the eight indie wish lists linked on PBP's home page.

Twice a month, Doctoroff and her husband go to Quincy's "Church of the Presidents," where O'Neill finds the books and Doctoroff does paperwork to support the program.

According to Doctoroff, the organization shipped 20,000 packages of books this year.

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Doctoroff used to run Bill Moyers's video company and nowadays she helps train writers to cover climate news.

If you'd like to donate books or funds, send an email to editor@winchesternews.org and you'll be put in touch with Doctoroff.

Winchester News is a non-profit organization supported by our community. If you appreciate having local Winchester news, please donate to support our work, and subscribe to our free weekly newsletter.

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Helpers Among Us - WinPAC unites with light

On a cold and blustery day, two post-graduate Winchester High School students and others stood outside the Stop & Shop inviting folks to buy luminary kits as part of the Unite with Light event planned for Sunday, Dec. 14. The successful program was started by Mairin Norton, a high-schooler who

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HELPERS AMONG US

Helpers Among Us - Alisa Dong needs your help with Thanksgiving food drive

Standish Lane resident Alisa Dong has only lived in town for about four years, but she's already immersed in helping people. And she wants residents to help her provide Thanksgiving Day meals for local food-insecure residents. A membe[illegible]'s Family Action Network (FA

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HELPERS AMONG US

Helpers Among Us — Coaches volunteer to bring on the cheer

You probably know that cheerleaders appear at sporting events to cheer on their teams, but you might not know that cheerleading is a sport in its own right. Or that Winchester Cheer coaches volunteer to help girls and boys learn and compete in cheerleading. Middlesex Street resident Erin Black is

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HELPERS AMONG US

Helpers Among Us - Patti Reilly wants your children's clothes

Although Patti Reilly opened her boutique, Jules, about a year and a half ago, she's already discovered the generosity of Winchester residents. That's why she and her husband, John, decided to offer a 10% discount on one item to anyone who brings in "gently used children's clothing.

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EVENTS

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NEWS

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The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: To mark Women's History Month and International Women's Day in 2026, the Network for Social Justice is collaborating with club leaders from Winchester High School and members of the Community Health team from La Colaborativa in Chelsea and

March 4, 2026

backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

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March 4, 2026

FEATURES

'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

March 4, 2026

EVENTS

Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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